

7/07/2008 This Week in Congress

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July 7, 2008

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Celebrating America's 232nd Birthday

July 4th is a special holiday to enjoy time with family and neighbors and be thankful for the freedom we have as Americans. I marked Independence Day by participating in Fourth of July community celebrations in Hutchinson and Hays. I also attended a concert and fireworks display at old Fort Hays with my family.

It was great to be in Hutchinson Friday morning for the community's annual parade. After riding in the parade, I was able to visit with many residents. Thanks to Olen Mitchell for driving me in his Model T Ford.

The parade in Hays is part of the Wild West Fest. This annual event features concerts, carnival games and other activities. Thanks to Josh Zweifel for driving me in the parade and to all of the event sponsors, chairmen and volunteers for their support of this community event.

Urging President to Make Funds Available for Communities Affected by Storms

This week, I joined Senators Pat Roberts and Sam Brownback in asking President Bush to act quickly to make funds available for areas affected by the June 11 tornado. Dickinson and Riley counties were hit especially hard by the tornado that destroyed homes and public property. In particular, we highlighted the need to move quickly so schools in Chapman can be rebuilt. Every school in Chapman was destroyed in the storm. In order to rebuild in time for the coming school year, funds are needed immediately to begin construction. [Click here to read the letter to President Bush.](#)

Many Kansans Still Eligible for Economic Stimulus Payments

I recently learned from the Internal Revenue Service that around 40,000 Kansans who are eligible for an economic stimulus payment have not yet filed the required paperwork in order to receive a rebate check. Congress passed legislation in February that made most Americans eligible for a one-time government rebate. Individuals who normally do not file a tax return, such as some retirees and disabled veterans, must file Form 1040A before October 15 to receive their payment.

Individuals must have at least \$3,000 in qualifying income to be eligible for at least a \$300 payment. Eligible income includes Social Security retirement, disability and survivor payments, as well as Veterans Affairs disability compensation, disability pension and survivor payments. Filing a tax return to receive a stimulus payment does not mean individuals will have to start filing tax returns again.

Please share this information with any retirees or disabled veterans you know who may qualify. [Click here to visit the IRS Economic Stimulus Payments Information Center](#). Kansans may also contact me for assistance.

Visiting Israel, the Middle East

So much of what happens in our country is affected by what is happening in the Middle East. This week, I visited Israel to learn more about Middle East peace talks, U.S.-Israel relations, Israel's security situation and the status of important economic and political developments in Israel.

While there, I participated in several meetings with Israeli, Palestinian, religious and government leaders, as well as experts in the peace process. I met with Prime Minister of Israel Ehud Olmert, Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority Salam Fayyad and U.S. Ambassador to Israel Richard Jones.

This visit offered me the opportunity to learn more about the situation in Israel, the U.S.-Israel strategic relationship and the Middle East peace process. I also learned about U.S.-Israeli defense cooperation and Israel's economy. I left Israel with information and experiences that will be helpful to my work on national security and international relations issues in Congress. [Click here to view photos from my visit.](#)

In the Office

Students from the 4-H Citizenship Washington Focus trip were in to talk about issues affecting rural America and how 4-H programs are developing young leaders. In with the group were Adam Hewson and Briana O'Neill of Larned; Joe Leibbrandt of St. Francis; Meredith Allison of Belpre; Marshall Anliker, Michael Beaver, Elizabeth Huck, Aaron Kucharik, Gayle Minnix and Caitlin Beckman of Scott City; Emily Bieberly of Salina; Michael Bowman of Syracuse; Emily Carney of Sylvan Grove; Ann Clawson of Englewood; Cassadie Copeland of Kingsdown; Heather Domsch of Pratt; James Heitschmidt and Shannon McNeill of Garden City; Kilee Hutchison and Becca Landgraf of Lakin; Hope James of Clay Center; Morgan Keller of Hunter; Casssie Kniebel of White City; Devin Mangus of Kanorado; Jared Marcuson of Oberlin; Cody Richter of Barnes; Elissa Stein of Gypsum; Aryn Sturgeon of Bird City; Susan Todd of Seneca; Lane Trautwein of Falun; Daniel Riffel of Stockton; Mariah Woolsoncroft of Salina; and Katlin Sens of Greensburg.

Several Kansans were in for a tour of the U.S. Capitol building, including Marvin and Elfrieda Funk of Hillsboro, Deborah Sturgeon and Danielle Kelley of Kinsley, Debora Farr of Nickerson, Justin Nusser and Rhiannon Becker of Plainville, Jane Melroy of Pratt and Melissa Keith of El Dorado. Also in were Mike, Christi, Ben, Brandon and Katie Spielman of Clay Center and Jeff, Patti, Chelsi, Tiffani, Rachel and Stratton Lange of Conway Springs. In from Hutchinson were Clinton, Monica, Caleb and Chase Hageman; Donna Basinger; Linda Henderson; Patricia Compton; Debi Ellis; Charlene Widener; and Patrick and Emerson Reading.

Very truly yours,

Jerry

